

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[date]

For More Information Contact

[contact name and number]

[name of health district] ANNOUNCES WEST NILE VIRUS POSITIVE [bird species] FOUND IN [location]

([location], Va.)—[Title, name and credentials of Health Director], announced today that a dead [bird species] found in [location] has been confirmed to have West Nile virus. This is the [number] positive bird to be found in [location] this year.

“People need to pay special attention to eliminating mosquito breeding areas around the home and protecting themselves from mosquito bites while outside this spring and summer. This finding could indicate an increased risk of human West Nile virus infection,” [spokesperson name] said.

(No or the number of) human cases of West Nile virus have been confirmed Virginia, (but or and) human cases were confirmed in Maryland last year. In 2004, 5 humans, 26 birds, 16 horses, and 432 mosquito pools tested positive for West Nile virus in Virginia. West Nile virus was first detected in Virginia in the fall of 2000.

The West Nile virus positive [bird species] was found in [more exact location] on [date]. The state’s Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services in Richmond confirmed it on [date]. “[quote here about local area response to West Nile virus],” [name of spokesperson] said.

People can prevent mosquitoes from breeding by turning over or removing containers around the home where water collects, such as old tires, potted plant trays, buckets and toys. People also should clean birdbaths and wading pools once a week, clean roof gutters and downspout screens regularly, and eliminate standing water on flat roofs.

West Nile virus is spread to birds, humans, horses and other mammals through the bite of an infected mosquito. Most people bitten by an infected mosquito do not get sick. People who do get sick usually suffer a mild flu-like illness. People over age 50 are at greatest risk of serious illness, such as encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord).

The Virginia Department of Health recommends the following tips to reduce exposure to mosquitoes:

- Wear long, loose and light-colored clothing.
- Use insect repellent products with no more than 50 percent DEET for adults and less than 30 percent for children. Follow instructions when using insect repellents.
- Turn over or remove containers in your yard where water collects, such as old tires, potted plant trays, buckets and toys.
- Eliminate standing water on tarps or flat roofs.
- Clean out birdbaths and wading pools once a week.
- Clean roof gutters and downspout screens regularly.

For more information on West Nile virus, log onto the Virginia Department of Health’s Web site at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epi/dzee/vectorborne/WestNileVirus/index.asp>.

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